

ADDRESS

TO THE

N. Y. State Agricultural Society,

DELIVERED AT THE

Annual Meeting, February 10, 1869,

BY

THOMAS HALL FAILE,

President of the Society.



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ADDRESS.

Members of the N. Y. State Agricultural Society :

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I rejoice to see here so many of the working members who were present at this time last year. So far as I know, the hand of death has touched but one in the circle of those who have more especially given their time and attention in furthering the interests of the Society—many of whom have been for a long time identified with it—and in this we have much cause for thankfulness to Almighty God.

We have also great reason for gratitude, that God, in His good providence, has blessed the people of our State, not only in giving us a fruitful season, and richly crowning the year with plenty, but in mercifully averting from us the pestilence and famine which have afflicted many other lands, and in sparing us the desolation wrought in some parts of our own country, by earthquakes, hurricanes and other convulsions of the elements.

In performance of the principal duty incumbent upon me, on this occasion, gentlemen, I shall ask your attention mainly, and as briefly as possible, to matters relating to our Society, rather than to a dissertation upon deep plowing, top-dressing or other kindred subjects, on all of which you are better informed than myself. As changes have already been made, and more are contemplated, this seems a proper time to do it, that those of our Members who do not regularly attend the Annual Meetings and Fairs, may become better acquainted with what is being done.

The clear and comprehensive Report of the Treasurer will satisfy the most skeptical that the funds of the Society have been judiciously used, and that the balance on hand is safely invested. The whole amount is \$17,677.96, of which \$15,701.50 is in stock of the United States; and it is hoped it will be added to from time to time, making a fund that will relieve the Managers of much anxiety, in the event of an unsuccessful Fair—a contingency we are always subject to by stormy weather.

The Secretary's Report, you have heard; and though, in the dispensation of Providence, the illness of our honored Corresponding Secretary,

Col. BENJAMIN P. JOHNSON deprived us of his valued services a considerable part of the year, the duties of the office have been most faithfully and satisfactorily performed by the Recording Secretary, Mr. THOMAS L. HARISON.

Before speaking of the Fair, I avail myself of the present opportunity to congratulate the Society that no work was permitted or done on the Fair-ground on the Sabbath other than the necessary care of live stock. The sound of the hammer and the saw was not heard there on that day. For this the Board take to themselves no merit over those who have preceded them. Heretofore it has been considered an unavoidable necessity; we thought differently, and having before us the law of God and the law of the land, gave public notice through the newspapers, that the gates would be closed on Saturday night and not re-opened until Monday morning, except to admit live stock and those persons having charge of it. The result, I believe, meets the approval of every right-minded person in the State.

The Fair was largely attended, and that without any of the extraneous means now, unfortunately for the good morals of the people, resorted to

for financial success in many of the State and County Fairs. No trials of speed of either running or trotting horses, nor shows, nor games of any kind have ever been allowed on the Fair-ground of the New York State Agricultural Society.

While but few will object to these at the proper time and in the proper place, none can truthfully say that an Agricultural Show was ever intended to be combined with such exhibitions. And in this connection I will not hesitate to express an earnest hope *that our Legislature will withdraw all aid from every County Society that perverts the funds of the State to such uses.* It is a libel upon the intelligence and good sense of the farmers, to suppose such things are necessary to make a Fair attractive or financially successful. The net results show that they will support all Fairs where the managers conduct them in accordance with the principles on which our Agricultural Societies were founded, viz., “the diffusion of useful knowledge.”

It is difficult to estimate fully the amount of good our State Society has done, by strictly adhering to this one point. By so doing it confers a benefit on both visitors and exhibitors. It is in these great gatherings that inventors and

manufacturers find encouragement and support, and without them the farmers would be long in knowing of or procuring the implements now so essential to successful cultivation. I think it is a mistake to suppose that manufacturers of Agricultural Implements attach any importance to the *cash value* of premiums. It is the opportunity to exhibit and make them known, which they want, and this they get at every well conducted Fair, whether State or County; in proof of which, I was told by an exhibitor of a small Implement at the last Fair, that he had spent over \$30,000 in exhibiting and introducing it, and had been well compensated for his outlay by sales which he never could have made but for the Fairs. The exhibition of Machinery and Agricultural Implements was the crowning excellence of the Fair. The increased number of new machines, and the improvement of those long known for their usefulness, showed in a stronger light than ever before, the marvelous inventive genius of our people. The time has passed when mere hand work can make the cultivation of the soil remunerative, and it is only by the use of improved implements that success can be attained. Even in the remote parts of our country the scythe,

the sickle, and the cradle, have been superseded by the mowing machine and the reaper, and by means of these and other agricultural implements the fertile lands of the West have been brought into use, making Chicago the most important port in the world for the shipment of cereals. And while speaking of this part of the Exhibition, I cannot omit to mention the indefatigable exertions and very efficient services of JAMES GEDDES and HENRY WATERMAN in this department, which I think entitle them to the thanks both of the Society and the Exhibitors.

The different Trials of Implements—mainly agricultural—have resulted in such vast benefit, not only to farmers, but to the whole community, that another should not be long deferred. In Ditching and Digging Machines especially, there is open a wide and very important field for improvement and invention; and when the vast quantities of wet lands, which could be reclaimed and made valuable by ditching, and the unavoidably slow work of the present method is considered, it seems to me that the Society might do great good by offering an opportunity for a competitive trial of these important machines; more especially as it is now claimed that there is a

Rotary Digging Machine in Illinois which has been successfully operated.

It has been suggested that a separate trial should be made of Portable Steam Engines, Sewing Machines, etc., but it would seem that all such inventions can be more effectually tested by those whose interest it is to procure the kind best adapted to their purposes. I allude to Manufacturers, especially those using Sewing Machines, who in preparing the various articles in their line, aim to have the best, and to whom \$5,000, \$10,000 or \$20,000, is a small expenditure for ascertaining that fact. Hence I think that no premiums or certificates of merit should be given to such articles at our Fairs.

Nor do I think there should be any awards for Pianos or Musical Instruments of any kind. In the great National Exhibitions held in London and Paris, where the highest musical talent in the world was congregated, it was no doubt proper; but Farmers are not supposed to be MOZARTS and RUBINS, and a certificate of merit or superiority of one instrument over another is simply absurd, and leads to unnecessary trouble and dissatisfaction. As before mentioned, the opportunity to exhibit to such large assemblages as frequent our State

Fairs, is what the makers want, they knowing full well the advantages to be derived from it.

The show of Cattle was never surpassed in excellence of quality at any Fair in this country. However, it is just to say, that it was much assisted by Mr. M. H. COCHRANE, of Montreal, and Compton, Canada, who took home a number of first premiums. If more of our breeders of fine stock had done—I say it with all due deference—as they ought to have done, this might or might not have been so; but so long as they withhold their stock, apparently in the hope that some one else will take the risk and trouble of contributing, no well wisher of our Society can regret if our Canadian neighbors take every prize.

The Fruit and Flower department was so perfect and has been so much lauded, that I deem it only necessary to express the great obligation the Managers were under to Mr. JAMES VICK, of Rochester, who made all the arrangements, and generously incurred considerable personal expense besides giving his whole time to the Exhibition; thereby relieving the Officers of much anxiety in regard to this very beautiful and attractive part of the Fair.

Surprise was expressed at the last Fair that no premiums were offered for Thoroughbred, or in other words, Race Horses. The efforts of this Society have been, and should continue to be, put forth for the promotion of the Agricultural interests of the State, and these it would seem will be best served by encouraging the production of that which is most generally useful, in so far at least as Live Stock is concerned. For large active horses, of about sixteen hands, there is always a great demand, at high prices; and a farmer who will use mares can raise one or two colts of that kind every year, by merely exercising the necessary care in selecting a Stallion of good size and temper, and of requisite bone and muscle. If the Stallion be a thoroughbred so much the better. In portions of Europe where the climate permits of plowing being done nearly throughout the year, the Clydesdale and other heavy draught horses are no doubt used to advantage; but in this State, with its long winter, the farmer cannot afford to keep a team for any *special* purpose, and as those which come under the class of "Horses of all work," will do almost anything that heavy draught horses can do, and do it quicker, and at

the same time are available as roadsters, I think the Society will most benefit the farmer by encouraging the breeding of horses adapted to *general* purposes. I do not object to, nor underestimate, the thoroughbred horse, but the money value of those of good pedigree and fine qualities is so great that very few farmers can afford to own them, and those of inferior quality have nothing to recommend them, either as roadsters or work-horses. The simple truth is, that farmers have no use either for weedy thoroughbreds or for those little trotting-horses so common at this time, and the breeders of them not only generally lose money, but run a great risk of spoiling their sons. For though there is no reason why it should necessarily be so, *yet it is undeniably true, that the racing and trotting of horses, whether at Fairs or upon the track, is accompanied by falsehood, trickery, profanity, the excessive use of intoxicating drinks, and the disgusting use of tobacco.*

I find, with much surprise, that for many years past a premium has been offered for the cultivation of Tobacco. I never heard of its being even suggested in any Executive Committee of the Society, and personally, I would as soon think of giving a premium to the man who could drink

the most rum. All classes seem to indulge in it, and even Ministers of the Gospel, from whom we should expect a better example—I state it with much regret—use it in proportion to their numbers, almost as generally as the people of any other profession or occupation. I could give the names of several—were it not improper to do so—whose days were ended in insane asylums from its effects. It is the forerunner of intemperance, and thus of almost every other vice; and it may not be out of place to state that the most experienced in the care of inebriates, say, they never knew a permanent cure of a patient who continued the use of tobacco in any way. Thus, with a full knowledge of its evil influences, I trust this Society will never again offer a premium for its cultivation. Before leaving this subject, I desire to call your attention to the fact that over 800,000,000 of dollars are annually expended in this country for intoxicating drinks and tobacco. The sum has been stated as being really much larger, but that just named is, no doubt, under the actual amount, *and all for that which is drunk—guzzled, would be a more appropriate word—smoked, chewed and spit away.*

Now, if this immense expenditure, which in its results tends to vitiate and demoralize man, by injuring his physical, mental and moral nature, could be diverted to the supply of the necessary wants of the people, poor-houses would hardly be needed in our land, and prisons and penitentiaries would be almost unknown.

Since the formation of the Society, but little alteration has been made in the rules then adopted. They were suitable to that time, when, as in 1841, the gate receipts were only \$349, and when this room or one of half the size would probably hold—with the exception of Live Stock—all the articles on exhibition. But the Fairs have become so large, and their influence for good so greatly increased by the immense quantity of Machinery, Agricultural Implements, articles of home manufacture, and Stock of all kinds, that twenty-five or thirty acres do not furnish the necessary accomodation—hence a change is absolutely necessary.

It has been the custom to allow entries to be made on the first day of the Fair, often on the second, and sometimes even on the third day, thus causing confusion and difficulty in making the arrangements, and great anxiety to the man-

agers, as under such regulations they must, of necessity, be entirely ignorant of what space will be required. This year we departed from the old custom and gave notice that machinery and live stock must be entered on or before Sept. 14th, being two weeks before the opening of the Fair. The advantage of this change must be so apparent to all, that it is quite unnecessary to dwell upon it, and if extended to every article, as I trust it soon will be, the arrangements can be perfected to the benefit of exhibitors and visitors, and much to the convenience of the managers, the clerical force, and all the employés of the Society.

It is wonderfully strange, that with all our readiness to adopt improvements, we should have gone on so long in this slipshod way, behind every nation on the globe where Fairs are held. I am not much in favor of anything foreign—especially since the Rebellion—but in the matter of Fairs, the Scotch and English, and even our Canadian neighbors, are much in advance of us, and we should not hesitate to copy from them, unless we can find out something better.

The Royal Agricultural Show of England of last year opened on Thursday, July 16th, and the entries for implements closed May 1st, being over

ten weeks before the opening, and for live stock, June 1st, being over six weeks. For the Highland and Agricultural Society's Show of Scotland, all entries closed over six weeks before the opening. Entries for the Shows of the County Societies are closed generally about a month in advance.

Now look at the contrast here. Our Fair last year opened, as usual, on Tuesday. On that day I received in Rochester, a telegram from a distant part of the State—some 300 miles I believe—from a person who wished to enter a carriage, on Thursday. Again, after the judges of stallions had finished their examinations, made their report, and one of them had left for home, a man who had been refused in the Business Office, appealed to me to allow him to enter his horse for competition. I told him what I have just stated, and added—which I should not have done—that he could enter the horse for exhibition; but even that did not satisfy him, and he went away, no doubt much disgusted with the management of the Fair. These are but two of dozens of just such cases that are occurring every year.

Now, gentlemen, may I not ask with propriety, and in all seriousness, whether it is consistent

with common sense, in view of the magnitude of the New-York State Agricultural Society's Fairs, to continue rules so illy-adapted to their present and prospective wants? I am sure you will say no! And I feel confident that the Exhibitors will say the same, and that they are ready to conform to any rules which the officers of this Society may make, knowing that their only motive is to promote its best interests, and that whatever benefits it the most, will, in a fully equal degree, be beneficial to the exhibitors also. Hence, though I think that the sooner we adapt our rules to the present enlarged sphere of the Society, the better, yet in deference to a few who think a year's notice should be given, I recommend, that during the Fair, and throughout the present year, notice be circulated in every possible way, that in all classes—excepting only Flowers, Fruits and Vegetables—entries will be closed from two to four weeks prior to the Fair, as the Executive Committee may deem best.

When the Entry is made, the Entrance-fee should be paid, and a description of the Animals, Machinery and Implements furnished for publication in a catalogue, which should be ready

when the Fair is opened, and sold at cost. The price of the Machine or Implement, and the place where sold or manufactured, should also be stated, and this would be greatly to the advantage of the exhibitor.

A change may also be made in the time of opening our Fairs, which I think will add much to the convenience of all concerned.

If opened on Monday, or Friday, and continued as now, four working days, no Exhibitor need be absent from home more than one Sunday; whereas by the present custom he is often detained over two Sabbaths, and is thus subjected to greater risk and expense. Besides, if every article was in its place a day or two preceding the opening, the Judges could make their examinations—particularly in the Machinery, Implement and Domestic departments—more efficiently and in much less time. No Judges ever worked more faithfully than those of the Domestic department of the last Fair, who devoted three days to the examination, and yet did not even see some of the articles, owing to the immense crowd of visitors during a part of Wednesday and the whole of Thursday. Now, if the work of the Judges could all be performed

before the Fair is opened, all days would possess an equal interest; but by the custom of permitting entries on the first, second and even third day in some cases, Thursday has become the great day of the Fair, to the discomfort of many, and I may add, disappointment of some who are compelled to return home, having seen only a small part of the Exhibition.

In this connection, another important consideration is the convenience of the railroad companies by which we are always greatly favored. Their managers have often been unjustly censured for not furnishing the accommodation required on the third day; but when the business of nearly four days is crowded into one, it is easy to see how impossible it may be to provide satisfactory equipment, without neglecting other service having quite as good a claim.

I also wish to bring to your notice the importance of greater efforts to increase the number of life members, from among whom your officers are chosen. If each member would add one or more—and I am sure there are none who cannot do it—besides increasing the funds of the Society, it would give a wider field to select from, and

help to diffuse throughout the State a more general interest in it than now exists.

The Legislature—wisely I think—made two appropriations—one in 1867 and the other in 1868—of \$5,000 each, to be expended under the direction of the N. Y. State Agricultural Society in the investigation of the causes of abortion in cows. It was ably conducted by Dr. DALTON the first year, and by Dr. CARMALT during the last, and as judiciously and with as much economy, I believe, as the character of the investigation admitted of. Both have made their reports to the Society, and though they develope many interesting and instructive facts, which will no doubt prove of value to breeders, still the cause of the disease and the cure remain undiscovered. While all will regret this, the results do not seem to justify the Society in recommending any further appropriation for this purpose.

After the able address by the Hon. ANDREW D. WHITE, showing the advantages of Agricultural Education (in the proper sense of the term), I will only refer to one branch of it, viz: Agricultural Chemistry.

I am glad that there is at last in our State an institution—the Cornell University—which gives

promise of a thorough course of instruction in practical Chemistry and Mechanics as applied to Agriculture, and we have good reason to expect great results from it. For apart from the noble gift of its founder—EZRA CORNELL—the munificent donation by the State of New-York, of the 990,000 acres of land received from the General Government for educational purposes, and which should have received the title of the State Endowment, will place it, financially, above any other institution in this country. I am aware that some of our best farmers attach little or no importance to chemistry thus applied, and one of the most intelligent I know, says a bushel of plaster on his land will produce a ton of clover, and no chemist can tell why. He may not be aware of another fact; that a bushel of plaster on land, near the shores of Long Island Sound, is worth about as much for producing clover, as a pinch of snuff. But if the causes which produce these different results are not known now, they probably will eventually be discovered; for though agriculture is as old as the world, I cannot but feel that we are, as yet, upon the threshold of improvements which no distant day will witness. I anticipate the time when every educated farmer will be

able to determine chemically what special fertilizer or manure his farm needs to produce the best results in certain crops, and when the returns for his labor will be double or even quadruple what they are now. With the increase and application of this knowledge, not only will crops be enlarged, but land now producing little or nothing will be made productive, to the mutual benefit of the owner and of that vast laboring population to whom an abundant supply of the necessities of life is of such vital importance.

Now this is not, I think, mere speculation, for comparing the past with the present—the wooden plow with the steel, the scythe with the mower, the cradle with the reaper, and the flail with the threshing machine—we find an advance of many hundred fold over the wisdom of our fathers in the use of labor-saving implements and machinery. A like advance in almost every department of science, is one of the most noticeable features of the age. Then, why should Agricultural Chemistry alone be unprogressive?

That this has been the case heretofore, is the strongest reason for anticipating that the advance will be rapid, now that thinking minds will have the opportunity to be practically brought to bear

upon the subject, nearly unhampered by the want of pecuniary means, which has usually been the most serious hindrance in the pursuit of Science.

I wish to say a few words in regard to a class of men who have done as much, if not more, to promote the Agricultural interest of this country, than any other, and yet, since my earliest recollection, they have been sneeringly called *Fancy Farmers!* They are generally Mechanics, Manufacturers, or Merchants, who have been successful in their vocations, and who have invested the first money they could spare from their business, in land and in making improvements upon it. They may occasionally have a ditch dug and find that the water runs the wrong way, but this hurts nobody, and gives employment to those who need it for the support of their families. They do not watch the Almanac and discharge their workmen when the days become short, but employ the poor when the weather and the hours for work do not admit of a compensating return, which the man who has no other means of support than the product of his farm, cannot afford to do. These men are to be found in almost every part of our country, and may be known by the houses for their workmen, their land and their out-buildings being

in better order than any others in their neighborhood. They are the first to buy, what is called, improved agricultural machinery and implements, which do not always prove so. Not being dependent upon their farms, they can afford to experiment; sometimes they are successful, sometimes not; but when they are, every farmer gets a benefit from their outlay. It is largely to such persons that we are indebted for many of the improvements in husbandry, and still they are sneeringly called *Fancy Farmers!*

I could enlarge much upon what they have done and are doing for the cause of Agriculture, but do not wish to trespass upon your time, save to say that I hope we may have more like them—more of such men as MECHI of London, the Razor-strop man, as he was and probably still is called by some—who has done more to promote practical and scientific Agriculture by his writings, addresses and experiments than thousands of rich farmers—and it is only such I allude to—who seem to live for no other purpose than to accumulate wealth.

Before closing, I desire to express my most sincere thanks to the officers of this Society, for their earnest and active coöperation throughout

the year. With the exception of two Vice-Presidents, and of our venerable Secretary, who, as before mentioned, was detained by illness, every officer was present at the Fair. They devoted their whole time to the work, and to them, with Ex-Presidents J. STANTON GOULD and General PATRICK, who rendered most efficient aid during the four days, and to Col. BOWEN, the Superintendent, the Society is indebted for whatever there was of completeness in the arrangement, good order and success.

I also wish to express my thanks to Ex-President JAMES O. SHELDON, for his valuable assistance. He was unavoidably prevented from being present at the Fair, but attended all our meetings at Rochester prior to it. Ex-President, T. C. PETERS, had removed to another State, therefore his presence could not be expected.

It has not been the custom to mention the attendance of the Board *though it would be a good rule*; but it was so unusual, and believing, as I do, that no President of this Society has ever been more efficiently and cheerfully assisted in the performance of his duties, I would not do justice to my feelings if I omitted it. For the good of the Society I hope their example will be followed

by all who may succeed them, as on the regular and punctual attendance of the managers, depends in a great measure its prosperity and usefulness.

There is one event I cannot mention without deep and sincere regret, and I had hoped the duty would have fallen upon some other presiding officer, in the distant future. I refer to the retirement of BENJAMIN P. JOHNSON, our venerable and honored Corresponding Secretary. Col. JOHNSON was elected President of the New York State Agricultural Society in 1845, which office he held, as is customary, one year. In 1847 he was elected Corresponding Secretary, and has since been reëlected in each successive year. Many of those present are his intimate personal friends, and having been associated with him in the management of the Society, well know with what unwearied industry, zeal and ability he has devoted himself to his duties, and without derogation of the merits of any of those who have been his co-laborers, I think that to Col. JOHNSON, more than to any one person, is due its great success, usefulness, and present high position. But failing health during the past summer and fall, admonished him that he was not likely again to be able to do his duty,

as in times past, and with a propriety characteristic of the man, he requested to be relieved from further service. The Society, as you know, assented only in part, but to its credit would not and will not give him up. He is now its Recording Secretary, and in that position I trust we shall continue to enjoy his companionship, so long as the silver cord of life remains unsevered.

The same Providence that has protected us during the past year will, I trust, guard us during the year to come, and enable us to meet here again with increased strength and energy for the faithful performance of our duty.

I have now only to introduce to you my successor, and I congratulate the Society on having elected a gentleman so eminently qualified. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you the President-elect, the Hon. SAMUEL CAMPBELL, of Oneida.

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